

学校编码: 10384
学号: 12020101152625

分类号____密级____
UDC____

回忆的漩涡：
《远山淡影》
中的叙事判断

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厦 门 大 学

硕 士 学 位 论 文

回忆的漩涡：《远山淡影》中的叙事判断

Vortex of Memory:

Narrative Judgments in *A Pale View of Hills*

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论文提交日期： 2013 年 4 月

论文答辩时间： 2013 年 5 月

学位授予日期： 2013 年 月

答辩委员会主席：_____

评 阅 人：_____

2013 年 月

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Abstract

Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* exhibits the narrator's memory with a complex and unique textual design. The text of Etsuko's first-person narration functions as both a veil to cover up and a guide to uncover the subtext. This thesis aims to reveal the subtext and appreciate the brilliant textual design of the implied author by analyzing the interaction between the text and the subtext of the novel with the framework of James Phelan's rhetorical theory of narrative, which is supplemented by the Japanese aesthetics.

The analysis first works from the text to the subtext. The text of *A Pale View of Hills* contains three narrative lines centered respectively on Etsuko in England, Sachiko in Japan and Etsuko's father-in-law Ogata-San. After analyzing the progression of the text, the authorial audience notices the existence of the subtext that the three narrative lines are intertwined. Therefore, he makes the interpretive judgments that the seemingly irrelevant memories about Sachiko and Ogata-San are the reflection of Etsuko's own past and present. However, locating Etsuko's unreliability does not estrange the audience from the narrator. By probing into the suffering of the character-Etsuko the authorial audience is able to discern that Etsuko's unreliable narration is not intentional deception, but the result of her misreading of the past caused by her traumatic experience. This judgment deepens the authorial audience's empathy for the characters in the novel to receive the underlying message of the implied author, including Sachiko/Etsuko's dilemmas, Etsuko's and Ogata-San's wrong choices and regretful feelings, and Keiko's suicide.

The comprehension of the subtext, in turn, coincides with the Japanese aesthetic elements in Etsuko's narration. The implied author writes with the heart of *mono no aware* (various sentiments aroused by things and events), *wabi-sabi* (appreciation of the imperfect) and *yūgen* (epiphany of depth), truthfully presenting Etsuko's state of mind when she is recollecting the past. Etsuko's Japanese aesthetic tone is a

technique the author employed to convey the subtext.

The Japanese aesthetic elements in the text and the subtext acquired through interpretive and ethical judgments correspond with each other. In this dynamics of text and subtext, the vortex of Etsuko's memory is displayed. Simultaneously, the authorial audience not only fathoms the rich implications of the novel, but also admires the implied author's excellent design of the text and use of the narrative techniques.

Key Words: rhetorical theory of narrative; subtext; authorial audience; Japanese aesthetics

摘要

石黑一雄的《远山淡影》以独特的文本结构展现了叙述者的回忆。第一人称叙述者日本女子悦子回忆性的叙述文本作为表层结构具有既掩盖潜文本又引导读者发现潜文本的双重作用。本文旨在采用詹姆斯·费伦的修辞性叙事学理论为框架,辅以日本美学理论,从阐释、伦理、美学三方面分析《远山淡影》的文本与潜文本之间的互动关系,揭示小说的潜文本,展现作者精妙的文本安排。

《远山淡影》的文本内含三条叙事线索,分别围绕悦子在英国的生活、日本的佐知子,以及悦子的公公绪方先生三方展开。隐含读者通过分析文本进程,能发现三条线索彼此相关,从而做出阐释判断:表面上是关于佐知子和绪方先生的回忆实则是在影射悦子自己的过去和现在。然而,对叙述者悦子不可靠叙述的定位并没有让隐含读者批判或疏远叙述者;相反,当隐含读者将叙述者悦子作为故事主要人物的形象及其坎坷经历纳入考量范畴时,他即可做出伦理判断:悦子的不可靠叙述并非有意欺瞒,而是其创伤经历(二战和女儿的自杀)导致的对自己及周遭世界的误读。这一认识加深了隐含读者对叙述者及书中人物的理解和同情,包括佐知子/悦子面临的困境,悦子和绪方先生的错误选择及其后悔之情,以及悦子的大女儿景子的自杀悲剧等。这种理解和同情正是隐含作者所传达的信息。

通过阐释判断和伦理判断认识到的这一潜文本,反过来又进一步印证了文本之中悦子的叙述所隐含的日本式美学特质。隐含作者以物哀、侘寂和幽玄的日本美学笔法如实反映了悦子回忆时的心理状态。物哀重情感共鸣而轻道德训诫的观念与潜文本中深沉的同情感相呼应,侘寂对无常与缺憾的欣赏寄托了悦子对过去和景子的后悔之情,突显了悦子看似不完整的叙述的美感,而悦子简单含蓄的表达赋予文本神秘深远的幽玄之美,同时将读者引向文本背后的深层含义。这些特点使隐含读者更好地理解并接受潜文本。

文本叙事中的日本美学要素与通过阐释和伦理判断得到的潜文本互为印证,相得益彰。在文本与潜文本这一系列互动中,悦子回忆的漩涡得以展现。同时,读者不仅理解了整个小说文本的丰富内涵,而且欣赏到作者精妙的文本安排和高

超的叙事手法。

关键词：修辞性叙事学；潜文本；隐含读者；日本美学

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Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro is a Japanese-born British novelist. Since his debut with *A Pale View of Hills* in 1982, he has received four Man Booker Prize nominations and won the award in 1989 with *The Remains of the Day*. Among his six novels and a short story collection, the Booker Prize winner *The Remains of the Day* and his latest novel *Never Let Me Go* attract most critics' attention; his another novel *When We Were Orphans* enjoys a special warm welcome in China, probably due to its Chinese setting, Shanghai with an Englishman as its protagonist. His first novel *A Pale View of Hills* narrated by a Japanese woman about her life in Japan and England, however, has not received enough attention by either the literary critics or the ordinary readers in China, although it has been widely praised in Britain and has been translated into 13 languages.

According to the searching results in cnki.net, there have been only twelve research papers touching upon this novel so far, among which only five focus on the work exclusively. Tang Xiumin, whose paper is the earliest one among the searching results, studies Ishiguro's work in the light of New Historicism. She argues that Ishiguro's works are representatives of New Historicism and they manifest the author's continuous concerns with Japan and its culture. Zhu Ping's "The Rupture, Reconstruction and Reflection of Cultural Identity in *A Pale View of Hills*" discusses the cultural identity of the narrator Etsuko. Bu Zhaoxia shares the interests on cross-cultural issues. In "Escaping from the Sense of Guilt: on the cross-cultural insights in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*", she thinks that Etsuko's problem is her guilt feelings, which is also the ethical problem faced by both the east and the west. She sees the author Kazuo Ishiguro as a great writer who transcends the cultural and national identity and expresses impartial judgments. The discussion of the eastern and western cultures is confirmed in Liu Yuanxia's "From Unfamiliarity to Misunderstanding to Mutual Approval: Eastern and Western cultures in Ishiguro's

novels” and elevated to the study of international writing in He Shanxiu and Li Zong’s “Influence of Globalization on Minority Writers”.

Apart from the above journal papers, there are also a few Masters’ theses devoted to the study of *A Pale View of Hills*, among which the trauma theme seems to be their favorite topic, and the focus of the discussions varies from the trauma experience of the characters to the relationship between trauma and memory.

As shown above, studies of *A Pale View of Hills* in mainland China are mainly launched from these three perspectives: cultural studies such as cultural identity, cross-cultural communication and international writing; trauma theory such as trauma and memory, and the resulting unreliable narration; new historical analysis.

These issues are also of concern to western critics. Justine Baillie and Sean Matthews make it a prior matter to talk about trauma and combine it with the identity crisis of Etsuko in the light of feminist theory. Cynthia F. Wong disentangles Etsuko’s “shame of memory” (127) in the light of the concept of “self-dispossession” (127) borrowed from Maurice Blanchot. Ruth Forsythe focuses on the cultural displacement and the mother-daughter relationship to analyze the identity of Etsuko. Elke D’hoker applies his modified concept of unreliable narration to analyze the distance between the narrator and the implied author/reader, and that of narrator and the facts of the fictional world in Ishiguro’s works. In his book *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary World Writers*, Barry Lewis touches upon some Japanese motifs in his thematic analysis of Etsuko’s displacement.

The researches mentioned above both at home and abroad have definitely covered some important themes and aspects of *A Pale View of Hills*. Some of them offered distinguished studies on the textual phenomena like unreliable narration, Japanese motifs, but there is no systematic analysis of the mechanism of the text and the subtext, and the Japanese style in Etsuko’s narration remains neglected by critics. This thesis will continue the narratological analysis of Etsuko’s narration with an examination of the interaction between the text and the subtext of *A Pale View of Hills*, in which the Japanese style narration is seen as an organic part of the text and

accords to the subtext, so that the dynamics of the narrative will be unfolded and the neglected Japanese style will be properly studied.

1. Text and Subtext

According to the Oxford Dictionaries Online, text is “written or printed words, typically forming a connected piece of work”. That is to say, text is the words of a book, including the account of events, description of environment and characters, and other explanations of the narrator or the author. Subtext is used in Dan Shen’s monograph *Narrative, Style and Subtext: Reinterpretation of the British and American Classic Short Stories*. Dan Shen defines the concept simply as “the deep meaning beneath the text” (Shen, “Narrative Analysis from an Interdisciplinary Perspective” 26). It means that the subtext is not explicitly presented with the words, but implied. From her reinterpretation of eight classic short stories, it can be inferred that the subtext is the deep structure underneath the text and the secret message of the implied author, like the moral lesson in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” and the racial prejudice of the implied author of “Desiree’s Baby”. It is conveyed through the implied author’s design of the text and recognized by the audience through a careful reading of the text. Dan Shen points out that the text has two aspects. One is the overall structure of the narration. The other is the choice of words that gives the text a certain style. In *A Pale View of Hills*, the text is Etsuko’s narration of her memory. It is presented in a carefully designed structure and special tones of a Japanese woman. The authorial audience is required to analyze the structure of the text in order to penetrate its literal meaning and discover its subtextual meaning. Then with the comprehension of the subtext, the audience can better understand the seemingly dubious narration by Etsuko, and the interpretation of this level of narration is even enriched when the authorial audience is equipped with knowledge of Japanese aesthetics. James Phelan’s rhetorical theory of narrative will be applied as a framework of analyzing this interaction of the text and the subtext of *A Pale View of Hills*.

2. James Phelan's Rhetorical Theory of Narrative

James Phelan is regarded as the third generation representative of the Chicago School (also known as the Neo-Aristotelians) started in the 1940s by Ronald Salmon Crane and his colleagues. The theory of the Chicago School is called the “rhetorical poetics of literature” (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 57) because the idea that the author’s intention of eliciting the reader’s response works through the form is the foundation of their research. Phelan developed his concept of progression on the basis of Ronald Crane’s “plot”, which is “the final end of the artist—his original intention to affect our emotions and reasons or to make us respond in a particular way” (Biswas 104). Phelan also inherits the study of the rhetoric communication of a narrative from his mentor Wayne C. Booth, the representative of the second generation of the Chicago School. The rhetoric communication is the communication between the implied author and the authorial audience through the narrative. James Phelan devotes much of his research to develop a comprehensive rhetorical theory of narrative, which is mainly constructed in five books: *Worlds from Words*, *Reading People*, *Reading Plots*, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, *Living to Tell about It* and the latest book *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*. *Experiencing Fiction* is considered the conclusion and development of his previous research. Therefore, the rhetorical theory of narrative used in this thesis is mainly based on this book.

Phelan’s rhetorical theory of narrative is a distinguished representative of the rhetorical narratology, which prevails in today’s literary criticism along with feminist narratology and cognitive narratology. All of them are categorized as postclassical narratology. Unlike the classical narratology, postclassical narratology defines narratives in a different way. As Phelan puts it, a narrative “is not just a story but also action, the telling of story by someone to someone else on some occasion for some purpose that something happened” (Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric* 8). Accordingly, the reading of a narrative is not a passive process for the reader, but a communication between the author and the reader; or, in the term of Wayne Booth, Phelan’s mentor, it is “the company” (Booth, *The Company We Keep* 16) the reader

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